

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05 FRB-03 TRSE-00  
XMB-02 OPIC-03 OMB-01 MCT-01 CU-04 /095 W  
-----108225 032222Z /72

P R 032010Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6679  
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
USSOUTHCOM  
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH  
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH  
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, ELAB, CO  
SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. CANDIDATES SUPPORTING LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL JULIO CESAR TURBAY WERE THE OVERWHELMING VICTORS IN THE PEACEFUL FEBRUARY 26 CONGRESSIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS. THE COLOMBIAN CONFEDERATION OF WORKERS WAS STRENGTHENED BY THE RETURN OF SEVERAL SECESSIONIST UNIONS TO THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION. THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS JOINED THE LIST OF PROMINENT OFFICIALS ACCUSED OF MALFEASANCE. THE SPECIAL CONGRESSIONAL SESSION HAS BEEN POSTPONED. DISRUPTION OF THE PUBLIC ORDER CONTINUED AT A "NORMAL" LEVEL.

2. TURBAY WINS; ALVARISTA CONSERVATIVES DO WELL. WITH ABOUT 93 PERCENT OF THE FEBRUARY 26 VOTE OFFICIALLY TALLIED, JULIO CESAR TURBAY'S SUPPORTERS ENJOYED A BETTER THAN 2 TO 1 LEAD OVER THOSE OF EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS, WHO ANNOUNCED HE  
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WOULD NOT SUPPORT TURBAY FOR THE PRESIDENCY, AND FREED HIS SUPPORTERS TO FOLLOW THEIR CONSCIENCES. A LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION IS EXPECTED TO PROCLAIM TURBAY AS THE OFFICIAL CANDIDATE ON A DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED. IN THE SIMILARLY DIVIDED CONSERVATIVE PARTY, THE OUTCOME BETWEEN THE RIVAL FACTIONS (THEY BOTH SUPPORT CANDIDATE BELISARIO BETANCUR) WAS LESS CLEAR. BOTH ALVARO GOMEZ AND PASTRANA CONSERVATIVES CLAIMED VICTORY BUT IT SEEMS LIKELY

THAT THE PRO-GOVERNMENT (AND TURBAY-LEANING) ALVARISTAS WILL HAVE THE LARGER CONTINGENT IN THE NEXT CONGRESS. UNLIKE THE LIBERAL VOTE COUNT, THE OFFICIAL REGISTRAR WAS NOT OBLIGED TO TALLY THE CONSERVATIVE VOTE BY PARTY FACTION AND THE ELECTION OF CONSERVATIVES NOT CLEARLY IDENTIFIED WITH EITHER FACTION FURTHER OBSCURES THAT CONTEST. THE EXTREME LEFTIST PARTIES DID POORLY - ABOUT 4.7 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. ABSTENTIONISM, VERY HIGH EVEN FOR COLOMBIA, WAS IN THE 70 PERCENT RANGE.

3. CTC DISSIDENT UNIONS RETURN TO CONFEDERATION. THE DISSIDENT UNIONS WHICH HAD SPLIT WITH THE COLOMBIAN CONFEDERATION OF WORKERS OVER INTERNAL REFORM IN 1976, AND HAD FORMED THE NATIONAL RESTRUCTURING COMMITTEE OF THE CTC, HAVE REJOINED THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION. THE REPLACEMENT OF FORMER CTC PRESIDENT DIAZ RAGA BY MANUEL FELIPE HURTADO, AND RECENT CTC HOUSECLEANING PROMPTED THE REUNIFICATION WHICH CONSIDERABLY STRENGTHENS THE CTC (SEPTEL).

4. MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS CHARGED. THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ISSUED A REPORT CHARGING MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS HUMBERTO SALCEDO AND SEVEN OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WITH VIOLATION OF LEGAL PROCEDURES, PRINCIPALLY IRREGULARITIES AND FAVORITISM IN THE AWARDING OF CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS (BOGOTA 1113). THE INVESTIGATION WILL NOW BE CONTINUED BY THE ACCUSATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. SALCEDO HAS DENIED RUMORS THAT HE WILL RESIGN AS A RESULT OF THE ADVERSE FINDINGS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE.

5. SPECIAL CONGRESSIONAL SESSION POSTPONED. THE SPECIAL 48-HOUR SESSION OF CONGRESS WHICH WAS TO HAVE BEEN HELD IN EARLY MARCH (BOGOTA 1601) HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER THE EASTER HOLIDAYS. THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE ORDERED THE DELAY TO ALLOW MORE TIME TO STUDY THE PROPOSED READJUSTMENT OF GOVERNMENT SALARIES, THE ONLY ISSUE WHICH IS TO BE CONSIDERED.

6. PUBLIC ORDER. DESPITE A SERIES OF ISOLATED INCIDENTS, ELECTION WEEK WAS RELATIVELY TRANQ BY COLOMBIAN STANDARDS. BOMBINGS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY HEADQUARTERS AND THE HOMES OF TWO CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS IN POPAYAN, AND OF THE LLERAS AND TURBAY HEADQUARTERS IN COROZAL, SUCRE DEPARTMENT, RESULTED IN RELATIVELY MINOR PROPERTY DAMAGE AND NO INJURIES. AN ATTEMPT BY EPL GUERRILLAS TO SEIZE A TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUILDING IN BOGOTA THE DAY BEFORE THE ELECTIONS WAS THWARTED BY PRIVATE GUARDS. FARC GUERRILLAS ASSAULTED TWO VILLAGES IN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT, INJURING ONE SOLDIER AND SEIZING WEAPONS, AND APPARENTLY KIDNAPPED A CONSERVATIVE POLITICIAN IN PUERTO BOYACA. TWO OTHER KIDNAPPINGS, OF A BUSINESSMAN IN VALLE AND OF THE SON OF AN INSURANCE EXECUTIVE IN BOGOTA,

APPEAR TO BE THE WORK OF COMMON CRIMINALS. STUDENTS RIOTED  
FOR THREE DAYS IN CALI TO PROTEST THE CLOSURE OF THEIR SCHOOLS,  
AND AT LEAST 40 STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED IN CONFRONTATIONS WITH  
THE POLICE. A GROUP IDENTIFYING ITSELF AS THE "14 SEPTEMBER  
WORKERS SELF-DEFENSE COMMITTEE" CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE BOMBING  
LAST WEEK OF THE NICARAGUAN EMBASSY IN BOGOTA IN AN ACT OF SOLI-  
DARITY WITH NICARAGUAN GUERRILLA FORCES.  
DREXLER

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Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014